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AUGUST 1985

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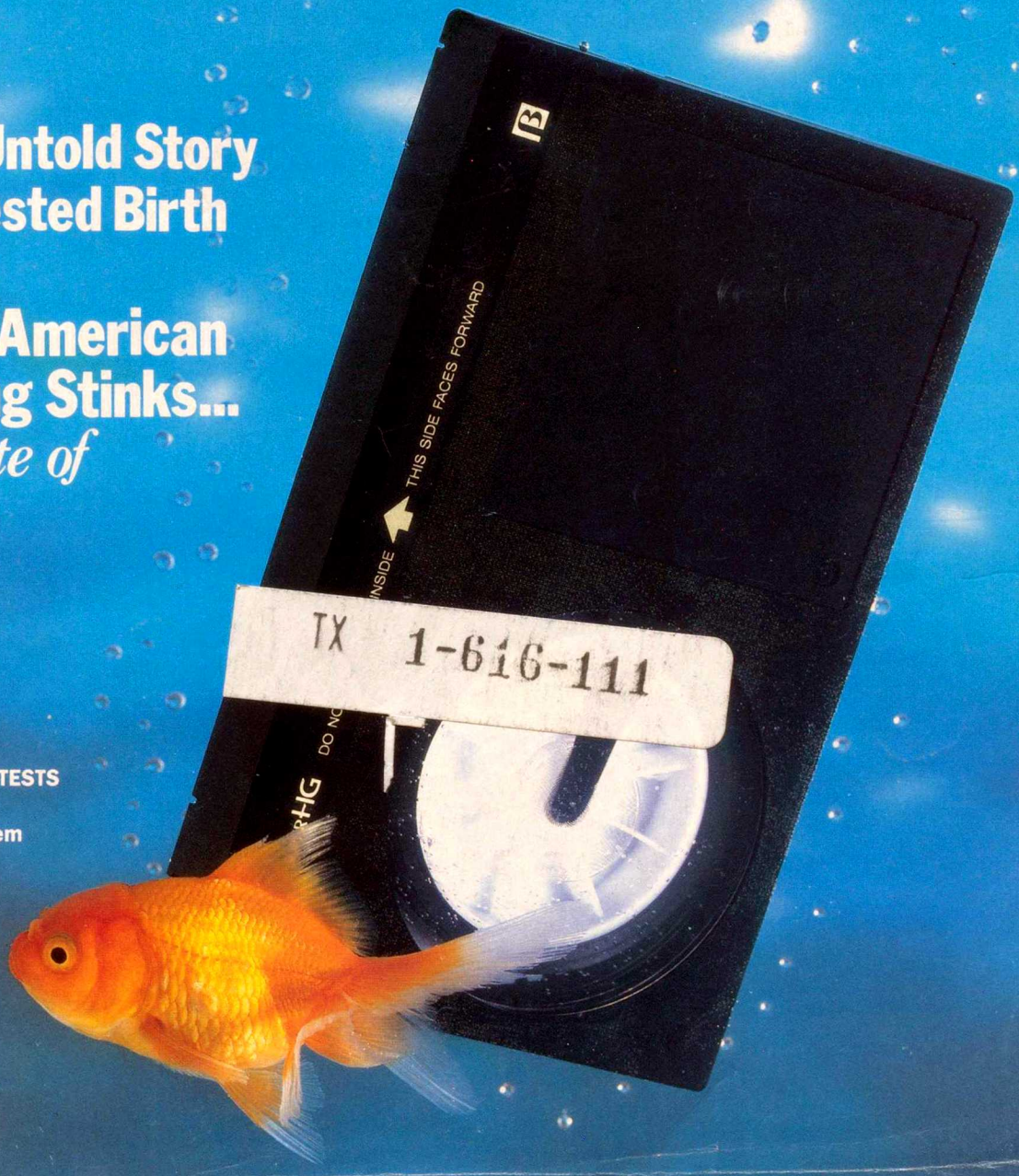
The Sad State of French TV



BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEOTESTS
Sony 8mm Camcorder
GE Uni-Cam 8mm Video System
Sanyo 8mm Portable VCR
& Tuner/Timer
Goldstar VHS VCR

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August 1985

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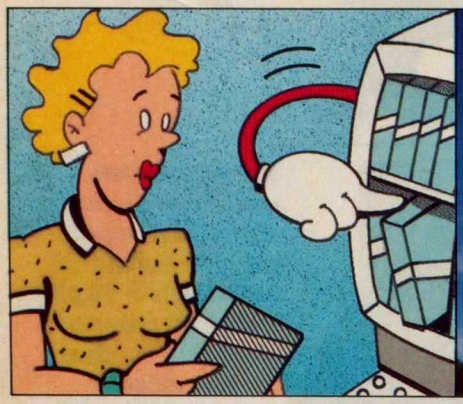

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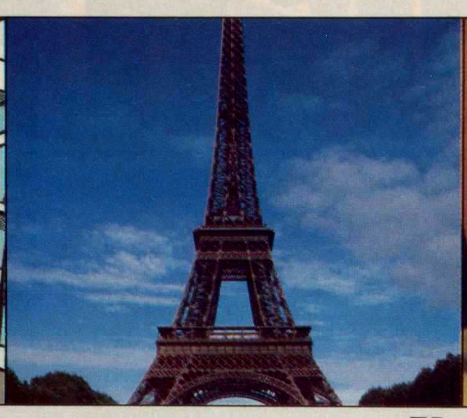

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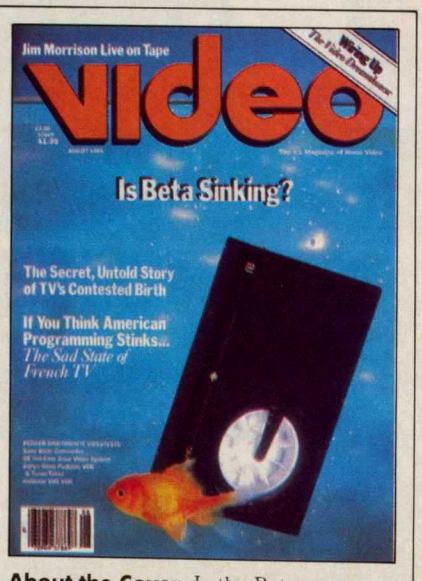

About the Cover. Is the Beta format's head above water or will it soon sleep with the fishes? Cover photo by Vittorio Sartor.

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Random Access

Personal Computers, News, and Games

Word Processors Catalogue Tape Libraries

A few months ago we reported how Fred Sweeney, a New Jersey videophile, used his Apple II and *PFS: File* (Software Publishing) to catalogue his library of 400 videocassettes. We explained how Macintosh users with the same problem were using *FileVision* (Telos Software) to perform the same tasks. The only drawback was price—*PFS: File* costs $125 and *FileVision* runs $195.

Now you can do much of the same with ordinary word-processing programs. Yes, the humble word processor can untangle your hopelessly disorganized cassette collection and set you on the road to anxiety-free viewing.

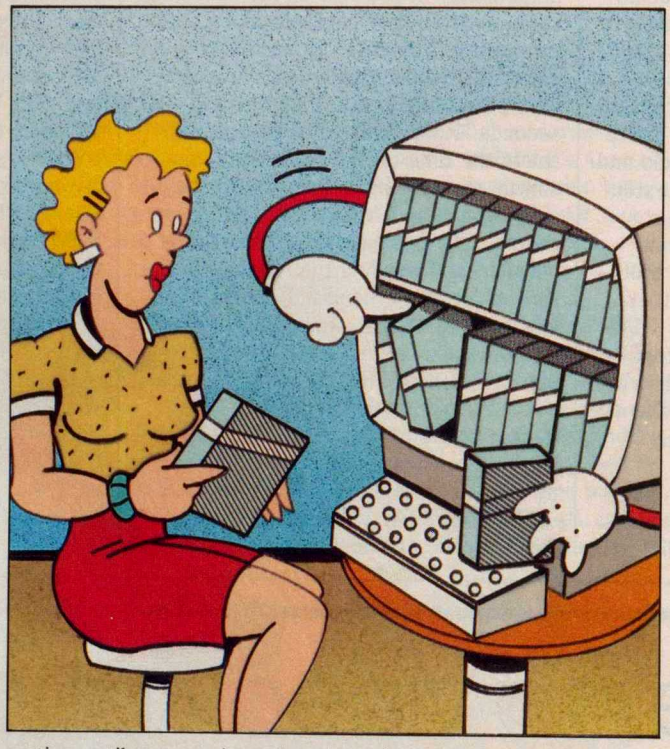
Even the cheapest word processors—including the ones that sell for as little as $19.95—have what is known as a "search" function. This allows you to scan an entire document for a single word or a short string of words. If your word processor has this function, you also have a videocassette library manager.

Here's how it works. For each item you own, use your word processor to create a short electronic index card. For example:

Title: Hobson's Choice
Director: David Lean
Cast: Charles Laughton, John Mills, Daphne Anderson
Category: Movie, Comedy
Tape Number: 6

Title: The Great Escape
Director: John Sturges
Cast: Steve McQueen, James Garner, Richard Attenborough, Charles Bronson
Category: Movie, Drama
Tape Number: 7

Just keep typing in the information until your entire collection has been entered. The format isn't important: include whatever data you feel is important.



Now start reading. Say you're in the mood to watch an Orson Welles film but can't decide which one to see. To scan all of the Welles films in your collection, search using the word "Welles." Your video display's cursor will then move through the index, stopping at each mention of Orson's surname.

You can also use the search function to look for a specific film, even if you don't know its precise title. Is it *Bridge on the River Kwai* or *Bridge over the River Kwai*? No matter. Just search for "Bridge" and you'll find the film in no time. You can also conduct searches by category, cast members, tape number, or any bit of information you decide to include within your index cards.

A word processor, of course, doesn't have all the capabilities of a full-fledged database manager. For instance, you can't make Boolean searches or relational comparisons. But who needs such advanced functions? Even if your video library includes thousands of titles, a simple word processor is the only data organizer you'll ever need. Of course, the data entry will take some time. But it may be well worth it.

—John Edwards

The Animated Mac

How do you know when a program is truly great? When you can't get it off the screen long enough to write something about it, that's how. At least that's the case with *VideoWorks*, a video-animation system for the Apple Macintosh (Hayden Software, $79.95).

At first *VideoWorks* seems like a strange idea. The Mac is not a video-oriented computer. Its screen is black & white, not color. It is not a game or recreation machine. (In fact, it is a rather hard-nosed business computer.) And it is paper-oriented. That is, almost every Mac program is aimed at producing documents.

So why create a powerful video animation system when the results can't be printed or even displayed on a TV monitor other than the skimpy built-in nine-incher? Our suspicion is that the Chicago-based MacroMind group (which designed another bestseller for Hayden, *MusicWorks*) did it to show off. *VideoWorks* is one of the most impressive computer-graphics programs available on any micro.

Imagine high-quality *MacPaint* graphics in full animation. Think of digitized pictures (*MacVision* video) overlayed with animation. That's what *VideoWorks* can do. Pictures can be originated using a part of the program called "Cheappaint," or can be moved into the program from an existing *MacPaint* file with a neat little utility called "Paint Grabber." Up to 24 such pictures—referred to as the "cast"—can be used in a scene. In addition to visual effects *VideoWorks* offers a basic file of sound effects that can be cued to the action.

Three disks make up the set: the program itself, a disk full of sample "movies," and an art disk with hundreds of predrawn images for immediate use. *VideoWorks* isn't a toolkit—it's a toybox! And—surprise—the 133-page manual is not only straightforward and useful, it's intelligently written, introducing the program via a short history of film animation and the

Illustrations by Cameron Eagle

role that computers will play in the cartoons of the future.

The best thing about *VideoWorks* is that it presages a new era in software. With new, fast personal computers oriented toward color video graphics on the way (Commodore's *Amiga* is one of them), the next generation in creativity may be dawning.

—Tim Onosko

Flash! Dick Tracy Green with Envy

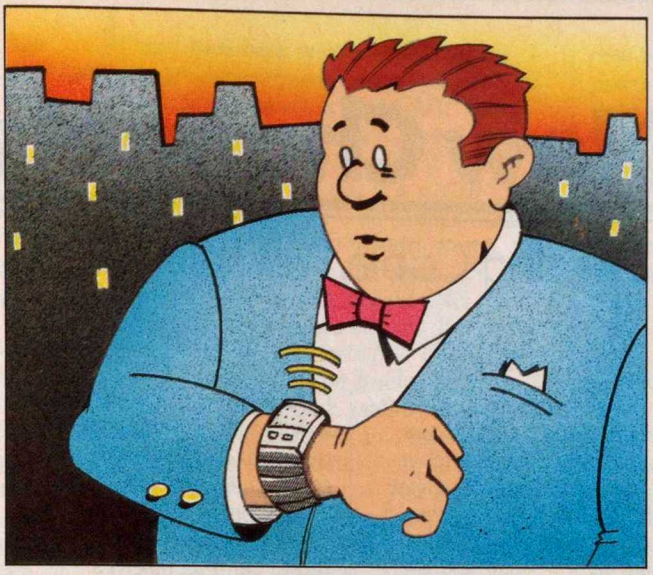
Seiko, the well-known watch purveyor, has been making a concerted foray into the world of very small computers. Yes, we mean wrist-size types that are now compatible with personal computers. Its Datagraph 2001 has 2K RAM of usable memory and lets users split it in half for scheduling and for data storage. The firm hopes to sell this smart watch to busy executives and doctors who seem to misplace their datebooks. Our guess is that it will have better luck with gadget nuts who can't resist showing it off to their colleagues. The package, which includes an interface module that connects to the Apple II series, is priced at $199.

Souping Up the Mac

Macintosh users will tell you they love everything about the innovative little desktop computer—everything, that is, except for a tiny icon that looks like a wristwatch. When it appears, it is the Mac's way of telling you to wait—and wait—and wait. For a machine with all of its processing horsepower, you can spend what seems like a lifetime looking at that wristwatch.

Well, the Macintosh developers seem to have gotten the message. A new model nicknamed the "Turbo Mac" is rumored to be in the works for introduction sometime next year. It will speed things up by using a much faster version of its Motorola 68000 microprocessor and a hard disk for data storage. In the meantime, however, the Mac team has rewritten one vital piece of the machine's operating system and added a handy utility, both of which offer new zip.

Finder is the program that



displays the Mac's famous "desktop" and allows movement from program to program. It's the headquarters for all of the computer's activities. The original *Finder,* though, was a virtual bottleneck. It was slow, slow, slow. New versions (numbered 4.0 and higher) are considerably faster and offer at least one new feature, a "Minifinder" that allows rapid transfer between programs. In addition, the new *Finder* prints out catalogues of floppy-disk files and has a "Shut Down" function to quickly eject disks and reset the machine.

Even more exciting is *Switcher,* a nifty program that breaks down a 512K Macintosh into four 128K machines so that up to four different programs can reside in the machine at once. *Switcher* adds a small two-headed arrow icon to the upper right-hand corner of the video screen. Pointing and clicking on it with the "mouse" instantly switches to the next program. The author, Andy Hertzfeld, has added animation, so that the Mac screens horizontally scroll from one to another. It's like having four machines on a turntable!

In its own mysterious way, Apple is furnishing the new speedups without much fanfare. The new *Finder* is being released as part of the system software on many new program packages. *Switcher* is making its way through the underground of user groups and via CompuServe's on-line MAUG Apple users' group. It is not known whether Apple will formally introduce the pair or provide the much-needed written documentation to support the improvements.

—Tim Onosko

Artificial Insanity

Mindscape, a Midwest-based (no less?) company barely a year and a half old, originally jumped into the shark-infested software waters with educational programming. Recently, however, it decided to change course and compete in entertainment. This month it is publishing an interesting program called *Racter.*

Racter (short for "Raconteur") is probably the closest microcomputers have come to Dadaism. It's really a question-answer program with a 2800-word vocabulary, much like the *Eliza* program which mimicked Rogerian therapy. The difference is that *Racter* is meant to entertain. And though its answers to users' queries vaguely follow the basic rules of grammar, Racter is longwinded, abstruse, and makes little sense. Racter is claimed to be the first nonhuman author of a book *(The Policeman's Beard Is Half Constructed,* Warner Books).

All right, you're dying for a sample of Racter's dialogue.

"Who are your chief influences as a writer, Racter?"

"Maybe Genghis Khan's uncle or maybe George Washington. He's from the Hotel Pierre, Genghis Khan, that is." Don't say we didn't warn you.

—Doug Garr

BEST SELLERS/HOME

1. **Print Shop.** AP, C64, AT. Broderbund.
2. **Print Shop Graphics Library.** AP, C64. Broderbund.
3. **Newsroom.** AP. Springboard.
4. **Dollars & $ense.** AP, APc, IBM, MAC. Monogram.
5. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, APc, IBM, C64, AT. Broderbund.
6. **ClickArt Effects.** MAC. T/Maker.
7. **Managing Your Money.** IBM. MECA.
8. **Mac the Knife.** MAC. Miles Computing.
9. **Music Works.** MAC. Hayden Software.
10. **Dazzle Draw.** APe. Broderbund.

BEST SELLERS/RECREATION

1. **Microsoft Flight Simulator.** IBM. Microsoft.
2. **Flight Simulator II.** AP, C64, AT. Sublogic.
3. **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.** MAC, C64, AT, AP, IBM. Infocom.
4. **Sargon III.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64. Hayden Software.
5. **Gato.** AP, IBM, PCjr. Spectrum Holobyte.
6. **Lode Runner.** AP, IBM, MAC, C64, AT. Broderbund.
7. **Karateka.** AP. Broderbund.
8. **Wizardry.** AP, IBM. Sir-Tech Software.
9. **Zork I.** AP, IBM, MAC, AT, CP/M, DEC, TIP. Infocom.
10. **Ultima III.** AP, IBM, C64, AT. Origin Systems.

LEGEND: AP = Apple, APc = Apple IIc, APe = Apple IIe, AT = Atari, C64 = Commodore 64, COM = Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M = 5¼" and 8" formats, DEC = DEC Rainbow, EPS = Epson QX-10, IBM = IBM-PC, MAC = Apple Macintosh, PCjr = IBM PCjr, TIP = Texas Instruments Professional, TRS = TRS-80, VIC = Commodore Vic-20, VTR = Victor 9000, WNG = Wang Personal Computer, ZEN = Zenith 100.

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